



The Sixty-seventh Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,695th Concert

VERGE Ensemble

Lina Bahn, *executive director*
Ignacio Alcover, *cello*
Audrey Andrist, *piano*
Barry Dove, *percussion*
David Jones, *clarinet*
Jenny Lin, *piano and harpsichord*
James Stern, *violin*
David Whiteside, *flute*
Fatma Daglar, *oboe*

November 30, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Elliott Carter (b. 1908)

Caténaires (2006)

Carter

From *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* (1950, revised 1966)

VII. *Canaries*

VI. *Canto*

Carter

Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux II (1994)

(Rough Breathing/Smooth Breathing II)

Jeffrey Mumford (b. 1955)

a garden of flourishing paths (2008), World Premiere Performance

I. Capriccioso

II. Molto appassionato e rapsodicamente

III. Capriccioso—Maestoso

IV. Sonoro

V. Capriccioso—Maestoso ed espressivo

VI. Con eleganza

VII. Impulsivo

VIII. Sparso—delicatissimo

INTERMISSION

Carter

Duo for Violin and Piano (1973–1974)

Carter

From *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* (1950, revised 1966)

VIII. March

II. Moto Perpetuo

Carter

Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord (1952)

I. Risoluto

II. Lento

III. Allegro

The Musicians

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FORUM — VERGE ENSEMBLE

The Contemporary Music Forum has been presenting concerts of new music to Washington audiences for thirty-four years. Throughout its existence, the Forum has pioneered the performance of works involving music and technology and has supported music by African American composers, American women composers, and Native American composers. VERGE ensemble, the performance group of the Contemporary Music Forum, is the new music ensemble in residence at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

The ensemble recently performed an all-John Cage concert at the National Gallery as part of the Gallery's 62nd American Music Festival and in conjunction with the Gallery's exhibition *Jasper Johns: An Allegory in Painting, 1955–1965*. In May 2007, the ensemble joined Ensemble Aleph at Theatre Dunois in Paris for four concerts in the Festival de Musique Américaine.

In the 2007–2008 season, the Contemporary Music Forum worked with the Embassy of France to create a unique yearlong collaboration, promoting new American and French music. Other members of the consortium participating in these events were the Corcoran Gallery of Art, La Maison Française, Loyola College in Baltimore, and the National Gallery, which hosted the November 2007 world premiere of *Sanctuary*, a work for percussion and computer by Roger Reynolds. Future projects of the VERGE Ensemble include two concerts of contemporary music at Le Poisson Rouge in New York City and a residency at the 2009 June in Buffalo Festival.

The Composers

ELLIOTT CARTER

Elliott Carter was born in New York City on December 11, 1908. His serious interest in music developed while he was attending the Horace Mann School. He was encouraged at that time by Charles Ives (who had sold insurance to Carter's parents while in the early stages of his parallel career as an insurance salesman and executive). As a protégé of Ives, Carter was exposed to a new sonic landscape that included the music of Harold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Edgard Varese, as well as Ives' own compositions. Carter attended Harvard from 1926–1932, where he studied with Walter Piston and received a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in music.

After graduating from Harvard, Carter went to Paris where, like many of the great composers of his generation, he honed his technique under the tutelage of the legendary French pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. He studied privately with her from 1932–1935, and received a doctorate in music from the École Normale in Paris upon completion of those studies. He then returned to America to teach and compose. He held teaching posts at Saint John's College in Annapolis, the Peabody Conservatory, Columbia University, Queens College, New York, Yale University, Cornell University, and the Juilliard School of Music.

Elliott Carter has received the highest honors available to a composer: the Gold Medal for Music awarded by the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Medal of Arts, membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and honorary degrees from many universities. Hailed by Aaron Copland as "one of America's most distinguished creative artists in any field," Carter has received commissions from many prestigious organizations. In 1960 he was awarded his first Pulitzer Prize in music for his visionary and groundbreaking *String Quartet No. 2*, and the same honor was bestowed on his *String Quartet No. 3* twelve years later.

JEFFREY MUMFORD

Born in Washington, DC, composer Jeffrey Mumford was the winner of the inaugural National Black Arts Festival/Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Composition Competition in 1994. He has received numerous other fellowships, grants, awards, and commissions, including the Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, and awards from the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, the American Music Center, the ASCAP Foundation, the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Meet the Composer, Oberlin College, the Ohio Arts Council, and the University of California.

In addition to the commission from the National Gallery and the Contemporary Music Forum for *a garden of flourishing paths*, Mumford has received commissions from Chamber Music Columbus, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Fromm Music Foundation, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois, the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt in Vienna, the McKim Fund of the Library of Congress, the Meet the Composer/Arts Endowment Commissioning Music/USA program (for the CORE Ensemble), the Miller Theatre (New York), the Nancy Ruyle Dodge Charitable Trust (for the Corigliano Quartet), the National Symphony Orchestra, the Network for New Music, the Phillips Collection, the Schubert Club (Saint Paul, Minnesota), and the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation.

Mumford's works have been performed by major orchestras including the American Composers' Orchestra, the Atlanta, Detroit, and National Symphony Orchestras, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. His chamber works have been performed by the Amelia Piano Trio, the Aspen Wind Quintet, the Borromeo, Corigliano, Maia, and Pacifica Quartets, the CORE Ensemble, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the Empyrean Ensemble, the Group for Contemporary Music, Imani Winds, the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Ensemble, the Mann Duo, the Network for New Music, the New Music Consort, the

New York New Music Ensemble, and Voices of Change. In the summer of 2008, he was composer-in-residence at both the Alba Music Festival in Italy and The Chamber Music Conference and Composers Forum of the East in Bennington, Vermont.

The Program

This concert is part of a city-wide project of the Contemporary Music Forum and the VERGE Ensemble, the “3gen festival.” It includes special concerts celebrating the centenaries of Elliott Carter and Olivier Messiaen, the eightieth birthday of Charles Wuorinen, and the ongoing work of several younger composers, whose works will be premiered at the festival. Collaborating institutions are the Corcoran Gallery, La Maison Française, the Library of Congress, and the National Gallery. Further information about the 3gen festival can be found at <http://www.cmf-verge.org/3genfestivalhome.html>.

About *Caténaires* Elliot Carter writes: “When Pierre-Laurent Aimard, who performs so eloquently, asked me to write a piece for him, I became obsessed with the idea of a fast one line piece with no chords. It became a continuous chain of notes using different spacings, accents, and colorings, to produce a wide variety of expression.” *Caténaires* received its world premiere on December 11, 2006 (Carter’s 98th birthday), at Zankel Hall in New York City, with Pierre-Laurent Aimard at the piano. Along with *Intermittences* (2005), *Caténaires* forms the piano set *Two Thoughts about the Piano*. The title refers to the curves formed by a wire or chain hanging freely from two points that are on the same horizontal level, such as one would see on a suspension bridge. Carter reduces the keyboard texture to flowing left-hand and right-hand lines that form arcs, eliminating the vertical harmonic element. Marked in the score *jaillissant* (gushing), the rapid stream of notes constantly fluctuates in register, reaching the highest note on the piano just before the end of the piece, then disappearing seamlessly into the instrument’s lowest sonority.

Again quoting the composer: “The *Canto* and *Adagio* of the set, *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* (One Player) were written in 1966, while the other six [movements] were composed in 1949 . . . [The six movements from 1949] were revised with the help of the percussionist, Jan Williams, of the New York State University at Buffalo. In gratitude for his advice, the *Canto* and *Adagio* were composed for him and included the set. Unlike the others, each

of which is a four-note piece based on different tunings of the drums, these two employ the possibilities of the pedal-tuned chromatic timpani.”

Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux II (1994) (Rough Breathing/Smooth Breathing II) was written to celebrate the seventieth birthday of Pierre Boulez. It differs from *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux I* (1985), which is a flute and clarinet duo, in that a marimba part is added. In his preface to *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux I*, Carter wrote, “The title refers to the pronunciations of classical Greek words beginning with a vowel or an R, called in English ‘rough breathing/smooth breathing.’ With ‘rough breathing’ (*esprit rude*), the initial vowel or R is preceded by a sounded H and is indicated by a reversed comma above the letter. With ‘smooth breathing’ (*esprit doux*), the initial vowel is not to be preceded by H and is indicated by a comma above the vowel . . . Both instruments have some rough breathing and some smooth breathing.”

As a tribute to Boulez, Carter incorporated into both pieces an honorific musical motto: B-flat–C–A–E=B(O)ULE—using both the French and German names of the notes. (“B” in German notation denotes the note B-flat; “C” in the European system of sight-singing is “Do” or, according to ancient practice, “U(t)”; “A” comes from “L(a)”.) The motto closes *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux II*, where Carter punctuates it with a flutter-tongue, which he equates with “Z.”

Jeffrey Mumford’s *a garden of flourishing paths* was commissioned by the National Gallery and the Contemporary Music Forum/VERGE Ensemble to celebrate the 100th birthday of Elliott Carter. The composer extends his thanks to Philip Berlin, Nancy Ruyle Dodge, and Otho Eskin for their generosity and to Stephen Ackert, head of the National Gallery music department, and Steve Antosca, artistic advisor of the VERGE Ensemble, for their vision and support.

The work is cast in eight short movements, each featuring a particular instrument or group of instruments. The title evokes the space for which it was written (the West Garden Court of the National Gallery). In addition, it refers to the expressive character of the developmental paths taken by the instruments in relation to one another. The composer writes, “It has been

my pleasure to have known Mr. Carter for many years, since being a student of his during in the early 1980s. I am pleased to add my small piece to the many that will be written to honor this marvelous creative artist.”

Carter’s *Duo for Violin and Piano* derives its character and expression from the contrast between its two very dissimilar instruments: the bow-stroked violin and the key-struck piano. The mercurial violin music—sometimes intense and dramatic, at other times light and fanciful—constantly changes its pace and tone of expression, while the piano part features long stretches of music of consistent character and is much more regular, both in rhythm and in style. As the piece begins, the pianist makes extensive use of the pedal to mask one sonority with another and then gradually to uncover the hidden sonority. The long opening section for the piano forms a quiet, almost icy background to the dramatic violin music, which seems to fight passionately against the piano. As the duo unfolds, the violin often focuses on two or more motifs at a time, playing in a rhythmically irregular fashion while the piano constantly plays regular beats, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. Toward the end, while the violin is involved in a very fast impassioned passage, the piano becomes more and more detached, playing a series of regular rhythmic patterns, each successively slower than the previous one. As the piano reaches a point of extreme slowness, the violin is heard increasingly alone, isolating for a few measures at a time its various motifs, with the quiet and more lyrical ones given more prominence than they had earlier in the piece. Composed in 1974 and commissioned by the McKim Fund of the Library of Congress, *Duo for Violin and Piano* was first performed by Paul Zukofsky and Gilbert Kalish on March 21, 1975, at a New York Philharmonic Prospective Encounter Concert and is dedicated to Elliott Carter’s wife, Helen.

About the *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord*, Carter writes: “[It] was commissioned by the Harpsichord Quartet of New York, which consisted of those four instruments. My idea was to stress as much as possible the vast and wonderful array of tone colors available on the modern harpsichord (the large Pleyel, for which this was first written, produces 36 different colors, many of which can be played in pairs, one for each hand). The three

other instruments are treated for the most part as a frame for the harpsichord. This aim of using the wide variety of the harpsichord involved many tone colors which can only be produced very softly and therefore conditioned very drastically the type and range of musical expression, all the details of shape, phrasing, rhythm, texture, as well as the large form. At that time it seemed very important to have the harpsichord speak in a new voice, expressing characters unfamiliar to its extensive baroque repertory.

The music starts, *Risoluto*, with a splashing dramatic gesture whose subsiding ripples form the rest of the movement. The *Lento* is an expressive dialogue between the harpsichord and the others with an undercurrent of fast music that bursts out briefly near the end. The *Allegro*, with its gondolier's dance fading into other dance movements, is cross-cut like a movie—at times it superimposes one dance on another.”

The Hubbard-Broeckman harpsichord used in this concert has been graciously loaned to the Gallery by the music division of the Library of Congress

**The Sixty-seventh Season of Concerts
at the National Gallery of Art**

December 2008

Sunday evenings at 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

DECEMBER

- 7 **Till Fellner, pianist**
Beethoven: Sonatas nos. 16, 17, 18, and 28
First concert in a cycle of Beethoven's complete
piano sonatas
- 14 **New York Opera Society Soloists from Norway**
Norwegian Christmas Festival Concert
- 21 **Alessandra Marc, soprano**
With the National Gallery Chamber Orchestra
Stephen Ackert and Dingwall Fleary, guest conductors
Danielle DeSwert, pianist
Music by Ernest Bloch and other composers
Presented in honor of *Oceans, Rivers, and Skies:*
Ansel Adams, Robert Adams, and Alfred Stieglitz
- 28 **National Gallery Orchestra**
Manfred Knoop, guest conductor
Eva Lind, soprano
New Year Concert

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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